



**The Phoenix Family Readiness Group Newsletter**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Special Troops Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (M)**  
**Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07**



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**H**ello again from Camp Taji, Iraq. As we approach the hottest months of the year (an indicator that our scheduled tour is becoming shorter), the spirits of the Phoenix Soldiers remain high as they continue to adapt to ever-changing missions. In this issue of the FRG Newsletter, you will hear Eagle 5 describe the Bravo Company change of command ceremony and hear final words from CPT Clay Bell, the outgoing Alpha Company Commander. Also, Hurricane 6 – formerly Raven 6- lauds a unique section of the HHC and their ability to sustain the force. Lastly, Renegade 6 describes some recent successes as well as explains the origin of the “Great American Wall”, and one HHD Soldier honors us by sharing a personal story of a great American. Thank you again for your love and support; each and every one of you is ever present in our hearts and minds.

## **BRAVO COMPANY CHANGE OF COMMAND**



**Above: Phoenix 5 presides over the Bravo Company Change of Command ceremony.**

On July 30 2006, CPT Alfredo Rodriguez relinquished command of Bravo Company after successfully leading the unit for one year. The Company has significantly improved during this time and has produced some of the Signal Corps’ best and brightest. The Officers, NCOs and Soldiers will remember his leadership long after his departure. We wish him well and know the Army will reward him for his exceptional performance.

Bravo Company’s leaders subjected CPT Rodriguez to a “roast” in the dining facility two days before his change of command. He maintained a good sense of humor as his Sergeants, First Sergeant and Executive Officer took a few jabs. The event was mostly light-hearted and he came out practically unscathed. The following day CPT Rodriguez shared lunch with the Soldiers and took the opportunity to catch up on stories from the deployment. The day of the change of command, the Company presented him with the guidon and everyone expressed their sincere respect and gratitude. As the actual ceremony approached, the hard work of several good leaders and Soldiers was soon to pay off.

The change of command was well planned and rehearsed. 1SG Guillory ensured that all the drill and discipline required of the participants was practiced until perfectly executed. SGT Whitesides took on several tasks including the production of programs for the ceremony. SSG Brown, SSG Robinson and the rest of Net Operations ensured the solar shades and static display were emplaced before guests arrived. SSG Ochoa and the EOD escort team prepared the Company for the reception. SPC Patenode was given the

responsibility of guidon bearer for the event. The overall task for overseeing many moving pieces fell on SFC Morris, the Operations NCO. The Company was at its finest as everyone chipped in to make the change of command go extremely well.

As expected, everything went perfect. The Soldiers looked great as they stood in the hot Iraq sun. The new commander, CPT Reggie Evans looked proud as he took command of Bravo Company. There were many guests and they all took the time to welcome CPT Evans to the Battalion. There are many loyal, dependable Soldiers who will certainly work hard for the commander. He has been to all their sites and has a good understanding of the mission and a genuine concern for his Soldiers. CPT Evans is surely impressed with the company's performance and the teamwork he has seen in the past week.

LT Simpson  
B Co Executive Officer.

## A WORD OF FAREWELL FROM NIGHTHAWK 6



**Above: A Company Ft. Hood**

Greetings from Taji. Time continues to move on, and although we begin to see double-digit days on the horizon, the Nighthawks continue to perform well above what is expected of them. This session will differ from most, as this will be my last entry as Nighthawk 6, and I pass the reigns over to CPT John Shermer. It is a bittersweet time, and the words I write here cannot begin to express my gratitude for all of your support.

This has been an incredible year. Other than marrying my wife, Ina, and seeing the birth of our beautiful daughter, Emily, this serves as one the greatest experiences of my life. Joy and sorrow;

courage and fear; laughter and anger, every possible human emotion has been felt. However, joy will be the foremost memory I take with me.

Your loved ones have helped make all of this possible. I have never met a finer group of heroes in my entire life, and I am proud to have served as their commander. I wish I had enough space here to convey my gratitude, and if I miss anyone, please forgive me and know that you will always be close to my heart.

CW2 Filipone and SFC Thompson, thank you for setting the standard for the Army. You have reinvented the concept of UAV operations and written the record books. You and your soldiers have saved countless lives throughout the Division. Thank you.

WO1 Hofmann, what you have accomplished here is unbelievable. You have taken a group of young, inexperienced soldiers and turned them into highly skilled men and women. I cannot think of a single intelligence victory in the Brigade that we do not owe credit to you and your Soldiers. Thank you.

CPT Finch and SSG Youngblood, thank you for serving this Brigade. You and your Soldiers have helped us "clean up the streets" recently, and you have provided me with an excellent operational education. Thank you.

SFC Walden, SSG Herring, and SGT McManus, thank you for taking care of the Company. You are not always in the limelight, but your daily operations are the most important of all. You have helped keep us together in the tough times and excelled during our peaks. Thank you.

CPT Allen and 1SG Welch, thank you for taking care of me and for being my Battle Buddies. Because of you, I never worried about the Company missing a mission, and you treated the Soldiers like family. Thank you.

Nighthawk Soldiers, thank you for what you do each and every day. You have never ceased to amaze me with what you can

accomplish, and you make the impossible look simple. You are without a doubt the finest Americans I have ever met, and the entire nation owes you their gratitude. Thank you.

Nighthawk families, thank you again for your prayers and support. Ina, Emily, and I will truly miss you. I pray that the Army will let us cross paths again in the future, but until then, know that you will always be a part of our family. Thank you.



**Above: A Company OIF 05-07**

CPT Clay Bell  
Nighthawk 6, Out.

## HURRICANES

HHC has many unsung heroes. I want to mention one section that has performed superbly day in and day out during this deployment. The maintenance section is made up of wheeled, tracked, A/C and power generation mechanics. These soldiers maintained the battalion's equipment from a 60 ton tracked recovery vehicle to 10 kW generators. They repaired almost everything. The section is led by an outstanding non-commissioned officer, MSG Muniz.

When equipment comes in broken, the mechanics quickly diagnose the problems, get the parts on order, and fix the problems. Most equipment come in the maintenance shop broken and about within 24 hours the equipment is fixed. Under the outstanding leadership of the non-commissioned officers, the maintenance section makes sure the battalion's equipment readiness rate is above 95%.

The mechanics also help out the company in any way they can. Sometime they help other sections in making Camp Taji safe by performing guard duty in the many towers on Camp Taji or securing

Coalition Force assets while they conduct their mission.

HHC mechanics are the unsung heroes of the company. They are the behind-the-scenes Soldiers that ensuring the company and the battalion's equipment are running smoothly.

CPT Thao B. Reed  
Hurricanes 6



**Above: Hurricane 6 and SGT Wehmeyer review .50 Cal procedures**

## A WORD FROM RENEGADE 6

Salam 'alekum in Arabic, or hello from Taji Iraq. Well, I cannot believe yet another month has come to end here in Iraq. While I am sure the time may not pass as fast for you family members, here in Iraq the time seems to fly by for many of our Soldiers. Maybe it's because of all the great things our Soldiers do everyday, or maybe it is because many of them enjoy doing their jobs.

One of the most significant events to happen in the Renegades Company was the Deployment of the Tactical Action Center, or TAC. As you read last month, the TAC was training up for a possible mission. Well, the



TAC deployed to another location to test out the equipment and refresh the Soldier's skills in making the equipment work. Command Sergeant Major Louis Holzwarth, along with some great NCOs such as Sergeant First Class (SFC) Paul Kavanagh and SFC Joe Trainer led the S3 section, while other NCOs like SFC Dennis Glasgow from the Fire Effects Cell also made things happen. And of course let's not forget the highly motivated Soldiers, like Bradley Driver Christopher Eplee or AFATDS Operator Dustin St Clair.



**Above: SPC Eplee waves from his Bradley Fighting Vehicle.**

The crew loaded up and left in the early morning hours. It was good training and was the fourth time the TAC has been deployed since we have been in Country. One might ask what the TAC does. Well, they are an extension of the Tactical Operations Center, or the TOC, which is the heart of the Brigade. The TAC gives the Brigade Commander capable eyes on the ground and better Command and Control of his forward moving elements. Sometimes he goes out there, but if he has to be somewhere else, he has capable Officers and NCOs there to help him run the show.

While many less high profile things went on this month, many can be just as important. One of the most important necessities here in country is good interpreters. They help commanders and patrols communicate with the local population. There is one man who manages the interpreters working on Camp Taji. That man is SFC Shawn Wilding. I got a chance to go down to the International Zone with him on a mission, and see and learn about his diverse and complicated mission. The International Zone was a sight to see, and is literally a city within a city in Baghdad. Complete with U.S. Embassy, restaurants,

apartment buildings, and many of the famous monuments in Baghdad. It is also where some of our wounded soldiers go to get healed up and where the infamous Saddam trial is taking place. It was an unforgettable trip, and I have a new respect for SFC Wilding's incredible mission. Sometimes Renegade Soldiers get to go down there on missions, and a few of them get to relax a little there.



**Above: SFC Wilding and CPT Walker in the IZ**

The last thing I would like to talk about this month is not a mission, nor a training event, but rather, a wall. Why would I want to talk about a wall? Well, because this wall represents the diversity of the Renegade Company and our Army. The wall is called the Great American Wall and is located inside the Renegade Headquarters. It has pictures of many Great Americans; the only criteria is that it must be an American. There is everyone from Great Presidents such as John F. Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln, to music greats such as Buddy Holly and B.B. King, or sports figures such as Mohammad Ali. We even have superheroes like the All American one, Superman; all are chosen by Renegade

Soldiers. However, some are not so famous, like the following great American chosen by one of my orderly room clerks, SPC Shaina Brown. Here is Her Greatest American, in her own words.

“My mother is the greatest American I know. She was a strong woman who never looked down when things went wrong, but continued to look up through every situation. When we thought things had reached their worst, she would wrap me in her arms and



**Above: SPC Brown at the Great American Wall inside Renegade HQ.**

remind me not to worry because God and his angels were watching over us, taking care of our every need.

When I was eight years old, my mother was diagnosed with oral cancer. The doctors thought that it was in its early stages and would be taken care of easily. They said that there was nothing to worry about. We had to travel around from Florida to North Carolina so she could get her treatment. It was a simple fix. She would have to go to the doctor's everyday and receive an IV of medicine. When the IV was empty, we could go back to our hotel room and play. The night after the surgery, my mother remained at the hospital. My father came to see us and called us into his room to tell us how it went. He almost choked as he told us the news. Just before the doctors were going to perform the surgery they found a second tumor in my mother's body that was about the size of a football. She had a tumor in her stomach. Because it was so large and developed, there was not much the

doctors could do. A week after I saw my mom again. She was lying in a casket with a bouquet of red roses behind it. She did not look the same. I wanted to reach down and touch her, but I was afraid. I half expected her to sit up and tell everyone, "What in the world are all of you guys crying for. You'll see me again." Now as I look at her picture I smile because I am reminded of the person I love most. She gave me something I will never forget. She gave me strength. Now I try to live everyday with my head looking up and never down. Even when things seem to be going wrong or when times are stressful, I know the best way to get through it, is with a light heart. And this is why my mother is the greatest American I know.

-SPC Shaina Brown

We can learn a lot from these words, as leaders, as Soldiers, and as Family members. Until Next time Renegades and Renegade Families.

This is Renegade 6 Out.

## PHOENIX 5

Hello from Taji! We are well into the summer and while it's hot at Ft Hood, it continues to be even hotter over here. Soldiers and leaders continue to rotate home on leave, and this month is no exception with LTC Cross, Phoenix 6, back at home spending some well deserved time with his family.

This month we are completing the company changes of command in Alpha and Bravo companies. While we say goodbye to CPT Clay Bell, Nighthawk 6, and CPT Alfredo Rodriguez, Eagle 6, with heavy hearts, we welcome the new commanders with open arms. CPT John Shermer assumed command of Alpha Company on 30 July and comes to us from 1-66 AR. CPT Reginald Evans assumed command of Bravo Company on 31 July and has come to us from 7-10 CAV. Both bring unique experience to their

companies and we look forward to great things from them in the future. Both CPT Bell and CPT Rodriguez will move up to the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Staff and put their command experience to good use. To both outgoing commanders and their families, congratulations on a job well done!

The Soldiers of the battalion continue to work hard and accomplish their many diverse missions. Phoenix soldiers operate all over the brigade area of operations and receive accolades for their performance. The battalion's Soldiers continue to look out for each other and it is an honor to serve with them.



## **To Dare Is To Do**

**Larry A. Seaman**  
**Command Sergeant Major**  
**U.S. Army**

**John W. Cross**  
**LTC, EN**  
**Commanding**